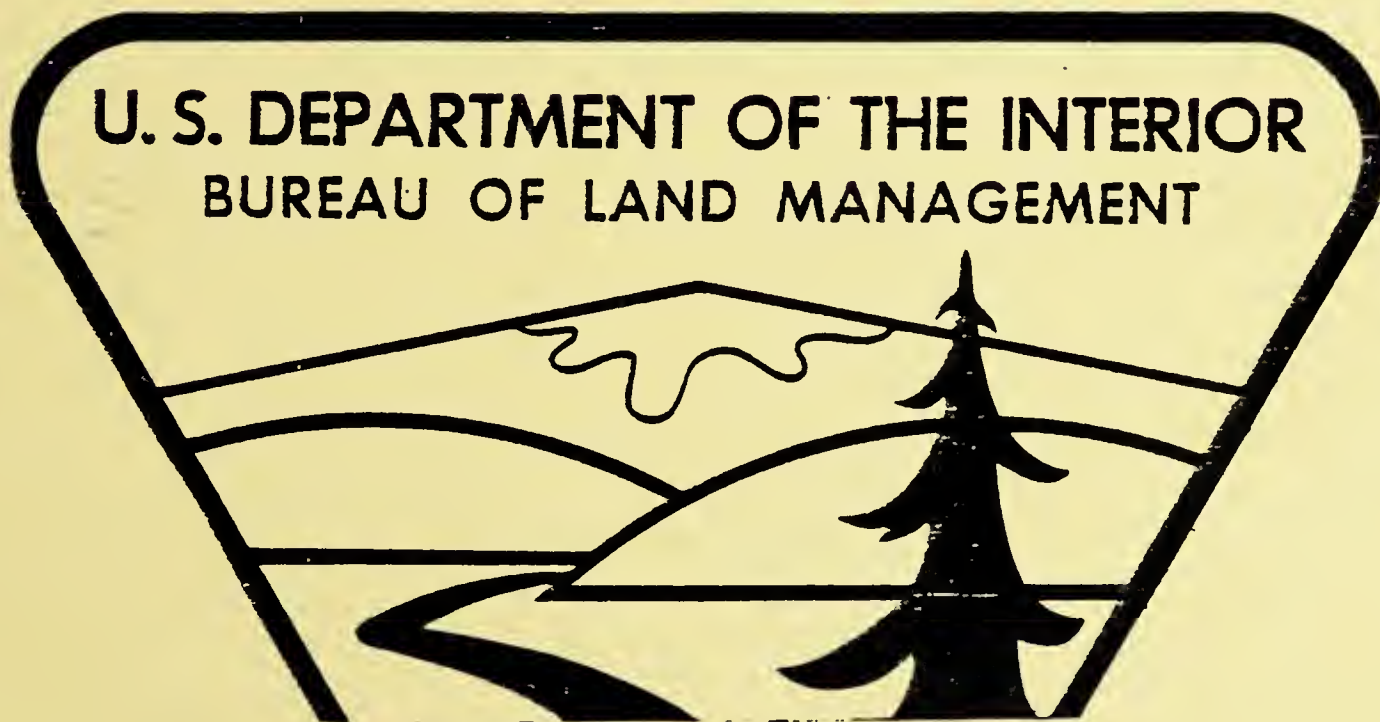




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A STUDY OF THE HISTORICAL INDICES AUTOMATION CRITERIONS



NOV 18, 1982 - MAR 1, 1983



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United States Department of the Interior

IN REPLY REFER TO

1275(943)

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Alaska State Office
701 C Street, Box 13
Anchorage, Alaska 99513

March 1, 1983

Memorandum

To: Deputy State Director for Operations

From: Study Team Leader

Subject: Historical Indices Study Team Report

This report is the result of the study team's effort to develop a method for automation of the Historical Indices (H.I.). This study was conducted during the period from November 18, 1982, to March 1, 1983. It was decided that the most productive method of obtaining valid information was to interview the users. We interviewed personnel from ANCSA, Withdrawals, State Selections, Native Allotments and Minerals (leasable and locatable), Anchorage and Fairbanks District Offices, and the State of Alaska.

Interviews on the subjects concerned were conducted over a period of time and were recorded. Each representative from the respective areas was given an H.I. and asked questions on how they use it, if they use it, and what kinds of information they are looking for in an attempt to make sure their needs would be met in an automated system. Each representative was asked to take the same H.I. to their units and return in a week with any additional comments from other members of their units.

We received good participation, and a great deal of comments and praise for the existing H.I. format and its reliability and necessity. We also received strong opposition to any changes in the present format. Users were adamant in their demands that all information contained on the H.I. in its present format is necessary for a check and balance of status before conveyance.

We also received excellent cooperation from ADP. Karla Allured and Steve Harrison contributed their expertise and their time to research and answer many questions in an effort to develop a system to accommodate the needs of the users.

This report contains background history on the H.I. and is a consolidation of users needs and problems and the team's recommendations for several methods to accommodate these needs in an automated system.

Catherine Crawford

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STUDY REPORT OF THE AUTOMATION OF THE HISTORICAL INDICES

TEAM MEMBERS

Catherine Crawford - Chief, Title and Land Status (Team Leader)

Mary Ann R. Hoyt - Supervisor, Current Status Unit

Jean Council - Supervisor, Technical Information Unit

Patricia Baker - Supervisor, Withdrawal Survey Unit

George S. Flispen - Supervisor, Support Unit

Mary Huntington - Miscellaneous Documents Examiner, Editor

TECHNICAL ADVISORS

Steve Harrison - Chief, Program and Systems Development

Karla Allured - Programmer/Analyst

THE HISTORICAL INDEX

Definition, Scope and Principles

The Historical Index is a narrative summary of an index to all essential actions and transactions which affect, have affected, or will affect the title or use status of public domain lands and resources. The Historical Index will consist of one or more pages for each township prepared on the prescribed form, at the specified size, in the specified format and content, and on a fully reproducible material of a high permanence quality. All essential actions and transactions will be annotated on the Historical Index in chronological order. Entries will be posted to show the description of the lands involved; the nature and type of the action initiated or accomplished; the file designation or identification of the instrument which initiated or accomplished the action; the date of the initiation or accomplishment of the action; the amendment, modification, or termination of the action; and such other information as may be required for the accurate and complete indexing and summarizing of essential actions and transactions and for the effective determination of public land title and use status.

Various types of entries are included in the Historical Index: withdrawals, applications for withdrawals, reservations, classifications, designations, and other actions which appropriate, reserve, or otherwise limit or restrict in whole or in part, the use of lands and

resources without actual conveyance of title, including amendments, modifications, cancellations, restorations, and revocations, thereof; entries which normally result in the conveyance of title, including those which are pending conclusive action, which have been terminated or concluded, in part or in whole for any reason without the issuance of patent or other instrument of title conveyance for a portion or the entire area for which the allowance was made; all leases, licenses, and permits which have been terminated or concluded for any reason; all leases, licenses, and permits which are pending conclusive action.

The Historical Index consists of a master index for each township from which copies can be made and a copy of the Historical Index for each township which shall be the working Historical Index which shall be used by the Bureau upon the completion and acceptance of the index to post day to day transactions.

Some principles behind the Historical Index are:

1. The Historical Index is only an index to the documents abstracted thereon. It is not a massive "casefile".
2. It is not intended that status of lands should be worked from the index alone. It is not intended to confirm all information appearing on MTP and USE plats without referring to the basic document for detail.
3. The notations in the remarks column are intended to be simply the dates on which various transactions were closed, rescinded, or relinquished. Otherwise the notations become extensive and complex.

Provision also is made for cross reference to documents of amendment, modification, cancellations, restoration, or revocation.

The Historical Index for each township under the provision and specifications of a contract should be prepared with one hundred per centum (100%) accuracy and completeness.

The master title plats, use status plats, and historical indexes shall not contain information or data pertaining to the following: applications or offers for leases, licenses or permits or for the right or permission to enter public domain lands; applications for grazing permits; lands or mineral rights or title acquired or administered by the Federal Government under laws other than public land laws; applications or offers for leases, licenses, or permits or for the right or permission to enter lands acquired or administered under laws other than the public domain laws; range improvements that have been abandoned as worthless or have been removed; applications for rights-of-way applications for exchange of lands; applications for sake of public domain land; and mining locations which have not resulted in a patent or title conveyance.

The following are specific informational uses of the Historical Indices in their present format. The H.I. indicates the following:

Segregative dates for lands.

Changes of land descriptions of applications.

Parcels that have had more than one application.



Land open to location at time mining claim located.

Location of rights-of-ways.

Land descriptions of patented areas when more than one patent is issued for one application.

Expired old oil and gas leases.

Amended descriptions of applications.

Track history of orders and public laws.

Occupancy dates shown to make state section line easements determinations.

Background

The study team for the automation of the Historical Indices interviewed staff from the Alaska State Office, Anchorage District Office, Fairbanks District Office, and the State of Alaska.

We received very strong opposition to any change in format of the Historical Indices. This opposition appeared to be generated by a lack of trust that all information needed would be found in the automated records. The majority interviewed felt that much was missing in the present automated system and that much of the information to be found in the system was not complete or accurate. Personnel also felt that records that have been retired and have left the state are difficult and time consuming to retrieve and in some cases were non-retrievable by any method.

The introduction and education required of the new automated system met with a negative response. Most of the personnel seemed unwilling

to devote time or effort to enter or retrieve additional information into or from the automated system when conveyance is a priority program with strict deadlines. One alternative may be to continue the entry of information from the old serial pages and other missing information into AALRS until the majority of lands are conveyed, and then implement a new automated system.

We also became aware that many Bureau employees are not knowledgeable regarding the information the automated system now contains or retrieval methods to obtain this information. Fear was expressed that information now on the Historical Indices might be lost in the process of change.

Personnel now use the present Historical Indices as an indicator of what has happened in each township and feel that because of the posting methods used by Title and Land Status it becomes part of a system of checks and balances that establish the accuracy of information on plats and in other areas.

Solution to Automation of H.I.

The ideal solution to automating the H.I. consists of the present data on the H.I. being merged with the present data base in AALRS. All information, presently in the data base and yet to be entered, would require verification and correction. This solution would provide the users with data from the H.I. on the identical format with the same reliability.

The team felt that the above solution should definitely be the ultimate goal of the Alaska State Office. At the present time there are too many problem areas in existence to adequately accomplish this transition.

The primary consideration for any development at this time must address our present priority objective, that of conveyance.

Adjudicator Concerns

The conveyance adjudicators were very strongly opposed to automation of the H.I. and expressed the following concerns:

1. All adjudicators would require training on a new system and feel the learning process would decrease conveyance production.
2. They state that computer down time is excessive. Automation of the H.I. would further clutter the present AALRS.
3. The concern of too slow turn-around time on the computer was expressed. They felt that additional users of the system would place an even heavier demand on the facilities and consequently turn-around time would be even slower.
4. The present data on the H.I. is very reliable and is used with very little verification for the conveyance process.
5. Fear was expressed that certain information may be lost in the transfer of data from the manual system to the automated system.
6. H.I.s may be presently abstracted at the adjudicators' desks while an automated system would require the adjudicators to leave their desk to view data at another location thereby decreasing



production.

7. The present format of the H.I. is such that a single page may be viewed out of sequence. If automated, much time would be wasted in searching for the correct information. The present format for the manual H.I. accommodates 50 line actions per typed page while the automated system would be limited to about 16 line actions per printed page.
8. During the transition period, that is, as automation is being implemented, a dual system would be required. They feel that during this time the system would be cumbersome and again decrease the production in conveyances.
9. They feel that, under the present system, a support staff (Branch of Land Records and Information) provides them with reliable data and products from which they can adjudicate. If automation occurs they would be required to utilize their time on a support function which is not considered cost effective.

Alternatives for Automation of H.I.

Alternative #1

Do not automate the H.I. until the majority of the land is conveyed to the Natives and State.

Advantages

- a. This would not interfere with the present adjudicative process.
- b. No additional equipment or personnel expense would be created.

Disadvantages

- a. This would not be in keeping with the Bureau policy to automate the entire records system.
- b. Equipment to produce the existing H.I. is becoming obsolete.
- c. Manual typing of H.I. will remain a requirement.
- d. Constant refurbishing of the H.I. would remain time consuming and costly.
- e. More support personnel are required for a manual system than an automated system.
- f. Time requirements in microfilming and card filing would remain the same.

Alternative #2

Totally automate the H.I. to include merging of the present data on the H.I. with that in the AALRS.

Advantages

- a. This would be in keeping with the Bureau policy to automate the entire records system.
- b. It would produce a complete, corrected and verified data bank in one system that would be available for all users.
- c. Maintenance of the system, when in effect, would be minimal.
- d. Rapid data entry and retrieval would be realized.
- e. This would reduce the number of support personnel who normally type H.I.s and microfilm and file records.

- f. This would eliminate the requirement for long carriage typewriters which are becoming obsolete.
- g. The space required to store the H.I. would be eliminated.

Disadvantages

- a. The conveyance processes would be interrupted due to the many necessary conversion steps required.
- b. The complete data base of the AALRS would require correction and verification before any merger could be initiated. This would necessitate additional personnel in almost every State Office discipline.
- c. There would be the cost of additional computer terminals and program development.

Alternative #3

Partially automate the existing H.I. with a change of format and develop a system independent of the current AALRS data bank. This could be accomplished by abstracting the information on the H.I. and entering just the actions that are not displayed on the MTP. This abstract will not give all the information now available but will leave a track to documents, while being easily accessible. These actions displayed on the H.I. would include terminated, rejected, and revoked actions. Applications now current, i.e. Patent, Apln, IC, are seen on status plats and are available by casefile or, to some degree, in the automated system. All H.I. data entry would be verified and the system would be secure. This alternative would dictate the necessity of a

dual system until such time as the data base in the AALRS is corrected, verified, and could be merged with the H.I. data. The dual system would consist of an abbreviated computer generated format of the H.I. and the retention, in the public room, of the current microfilm cards. These cards would not be updated but would serve as individual township history documents only.

Advantages

- a. This would be in keeping with the Bureau policy to automate the records system.
- b. This system could be implemented in a relatively short time frame.
- c. This would eliminate the necessity to type, file, refurbish, and microfilm the existing H.I. format.
- d. Long carriage typewriters and the cost of vellum paper would be eliminated.
- e. Data entry would be expedited and easier to maintain.

Disadvantages

- a. This would require adjudicators to retrieve information from two separate systems which would decrease conveyance production.
- b. This would not enhance the existing computer data bank.
- c. All present historical data would require abstraction/verification and entry into the automated system which would necessitate increased personnel.
- d. Users would be required to utilize all informational sources to retrieve adequate data.

- e. Additional computer terminals/printers would be required in all areas.
- f. The computer turn-around and down time would not be eliminated.

Alternative #4

Establish an interim semi-automated H.I. system which would provide a bridging step between the manual system and complete automation. The semi-automated system would consist of word processors with computer compatability, and the allied printer would allow the retention of the current format. This system would allow information introduced to its data banks to be transferred to the Alaska Automated Land Records System as soon as this became feasible.

Advantages

- a. The conveyance process would not be interrupted by either conversion or format changes.
- b. The data from the word processor can later be merged with the computer data bank once the conveyance process is of a lesser priority.
- c. Training would not be required for adjudicative personnel, and this would result in no time lost in the adjudicative process.
- d. Adjudication would not be required to utilize more than one source for information.
- e. As H.I.s are updated a newly generated H.I. would be



produced and stored on magnetic tape thus eliminating the filing of the vellums.

- f. This would replace the obsolete typewriters presently used for producing the H.I.s.

Disadvantages

- a. This does not provide for total automation at this time.
- b. A slight temporary increase of personnel would be required for data entry.
- c. Purchase or lease of word processors with printers would be required.
- d. This would not, at this time, correct or enhance the computer data bank.

Study Team Recommendation

The future of the Historical Indices is obviously with the automated system but given the constraints of conveyance priority time frames it would appear premature to instigate total automation at this time.

Alternative #4 will allow interim automation, address the current user needs, and at the same time provide the necessary bridge to total automation at a future date. In view of this the team strongly recommends the adoption of Alternative #4.

A word processing system that has computer compatability would allow the retention of the current format at this critical time of land conveyances thus not interrupting the adjudicative processes. This would

allow information introduced into the processor data banks to be transferred to the Alaska Automated Land Records System as soon as this became feasible. The use of the word processing system would necessitate the retention of microfilm records and personnel so this would not reduce production costs in this area. It would, however, reduce the time spent recording the information by eliminating the slow and cumbersome typewriters now used, thus eventually producing more cost effectiveness in this area. When automation of the Historical Indices takes place this equipment would not be rendered obsolete as it could continue to be utilized in other areas of clerical support.

The present Title and Land Status Support Unit personnel responsible for producing the Historical Indices could continue to keep the daily entries current and simultaneously convert to the word processing system. This would be a rather slow process as it would take approximately 3 years to make the conversion of the approximately 12,000 indices in the Anchorage Land District. A more satisfactory time frame for conversion could be achieved by increasing the unit with temporary personnel whose sole duties would be entering into the processor data banks what is currently on the Historical Indices.

The initial necessary equipment could be obtained by purchasing or leasing two processors with a single printer.

SUMMARY

The team, in the conclusion of this study, would like to reiterate that our efforts to develop a method to automate the H.I. met with a negative response from the adjudicative staff for reasons already stated.

The team recognizes that the primary priority of the Alaska State Office is land conveyance and therefore recommends that any procedures or systems developed do not hamper the conveyance process.

